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ABSTRACT

This guide was designed for use in home education programs aimed at helping both children and parents improve their self-confidence, as a preliminary step toward helping children succeed at school. Specific behavioral goals for the parent trainer, the parent, and the child are presented in five areas: (1) relationship to self, (2) relationship to adults (in the case of children) or relationship to children (in the case of adults), (3) relationship to peers, (4) relationship to materials and ideas, and (5) relationship to a group. These goals are to be met through training sessions, parents' group activities, and children's group activities. A few activities for parents to use with their children as a followup to training sessions are suggested. (JMB)

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HOME START EDUCATION: A GUIDELINE FOR CONTENT AREAS

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HOME START EDUCATION:

A GUIDELINE FOR CONTENT AREAS

Carefully developed parent education programs create successful parents and children (Gordon, 1973). What follows in this guide is a presentation of significant content areas in parent-child education synthesized from the work of (Baumrind, 1972; Buchanan, 1965; Gordon, 1977; and White, 1973). The content areas are described as behavioral goals in five areas, each area is a continuum upon which a child or parent can be located, and then helped to develop to his optimum ability.

Rationale

Parents are a young child's best teacher; differences in achievement in school appears to relate to attitude, skills and interests which a child brings to school. Enabling parents to see themselves as "teachers" and to have opportunities to understand and foster their child's growth and development is one of a democratic society's ways to survive and fulfill its promise.

Ample research evidence indicates that two conditions which prepare children to succeed in school are: 1. the broad non-specific nature of experience which allows children to develop problem solving skills that are transferable from one experience to another (Nevius, 1977; Wohwill, 1973); and 2. the effectiveness of parents as

teachers, a competency which is developed as parents learn the value and nature of experience (Gordon, 1973; White, 1976). Goals of the Home Start Program are common to both parents and their children; that is, that each individual would develop a sense of worth, to the extent that the Home Start Program can affect it.

A primary goal is that individuals will feel comfortable with themselves, be self accepting enough to be free to reach out and learn; comfortable to the extent that all of their energies are not directed toward dealing with anxiety. The goal is for each person to have enough confidence in himself to try the new, to risk failure, to persist with the task to a level of satisfaction. To accomplish the primary goal additional specific goals have been identified in each of five areas of achievement. Each area is related to the child's potential functioning in school, but each one relates to the skills, abilities and values that he brings with him from home. Therefore the goals for training parents become common with goals for training children because what the child is depends upon the quality of support at home. The five areas mentioned above may be termed "relationships" and they are: (1) relationship to self; (2) relationship to adults (in the case of children), relationship to children (in case of parents);

(3) relationship to peers; (4) relationship to materials and ideas; and (5) relationship to a group. These relationships serve as indicators of where the individual is and as facilitators of "hoped to be achieved" goals. They help in assessing individual levels as well as in prescribing educational programs.

The Educational Goals (Buchanan, 1965)

1. Relationship to Self.

   Relationship to self encompasses three general behaviors in which this relationship is viewed:

   a. independence in self help
   b. self control
   c. acceptance and expression of feelings

2. Relationship to children/adults.

   This relationship concerns itself with several behaviors, such as:

   a. the parent uses nurturance, warmth, power and control.
   b. the parent is a modeling agent providing imitatable behavior.
   c. the parent is a support person when the child needs encouragement.
   d. the parent organizes the child's activities and plays a consulting role.

e. the child learns to see the adult as a supportive person (a source of desirable control) and to be able to ask for help when needed.

f. the child learns to use the parent as a resource person, consulting the parent when he is unable to solve a problem alone.

g. the child learns the adult will help him control his feelings until he is able to once more manage them himself.

3. Relationship to Peers.

Life is a social situation in which the individual has an opportunity to learn and practice effective interaction with other individuals. One of the measures of success is the quality of relationships to peers.

The desired behaviors in this category are:

a. work or play on a cooperative level with others by contributing ideas, helping in learning situations, and incorporating ideas and help from others.

b. learn to settle differences by talking things over.

c. safely refuse to participate in an activity suggested by another.

d. refuse to participate in activities that are destructive to self or another.

These behaviors are optimum goals toward which Home Start is working. There is a continuum of behaviors from the lowest levels to these high level goals. Decisions regarding particular individuals are based on where they are in relation to the optimum behavior.

4. Relationship to Materials and Ideas.

This area refers to interaction with materials and ideas, things other than those which are human. The goals sought under this relationship are:

a. to make choices and appropriate decisions independent of teacher, parent, or parent trainer.

b. create learning opportunities (parent).

c. work with involvement (child).

d. clean up when task completed (child).

e. uses materials, ideas and apparatus in creative ways (child).

5. Relationship to Group.

The fifth and last relationship is one that is particularly related to school and parent training

classes or workshops; it is usually in these settings that one finds oneself as a member of a group organized for a common purpose.

The behaviors under this area are:

a. support the common group aims.

b. participate as a group member.

c. learn that certain rules and laws are necessary.

These relationship areas provide opportunity for parents and children to achieve the common goal of succeeding in school and society. They make possible the parent's investment and involvement in their children which support a learning style required in successful school accomplishment.

Content of the curriculum:

The curriculum is experiences in these five areas:

1. Relationship to Self
2. Relationship to Children and Adults
3. Relationship to Peers
4. Relationship to Materials and Ideas
5. Relationship to the Group

The Home Start Program comes into a child's life during his/her second to fourth year. The child is at some point on each of the five "roads" identified above when Home Start meets him. Who is to say how far he or she will go by the end of that year?

Guidelines for Teaching Content Areas

The following guidelines are representative ideas and examples to promote learning by parents and children. They are explained through a sequence of experiences for each, in the five areas.

Implementation of the learning sequence as represented in Table 1 requires a director, parent trainer, parents, and children.

(Insert Table 1 here)

Relationship to Self

Training Session

1. The parent trainer will create learning experiences that allow the child to successfully grow in self help.

   For example: 1) select materials for an activity 2) button or zip clothing; 3) solve simple problems related to his/her own need; and 4) arrange a simple environment of chairs to table.

2. In the area of affect and feeling the child will express his feelings and thoughts by talking about them with the mother or parent trainer.

   For example: 1) talking about feelings when looking at a photograph of himself. 2) saying when he/she is angry or happy.

Parent Follow Up

The parent will build and elaborate upon behaviors and decisions modeled by the parent trainer.

For example: The child helps set the table, dresses self to extent able and is encouraged to discuss his/her feelings.

Parent Group

1. Parents will discuss experiences that relate to the development of a healthy self for themselves and their children.
2. The director and parent trainers will organize additional input, such as films, resource person, and directed observations of the children during the weekly children's group.

Children's Group

1. The child makes appropriate choices for his/her own involvement, learns to take turns, cares for his/her own physical needs, cleans up after completing activity, attends to story or record, learns to handle frustrations in acceptable ways.
2. The child learns to defend self and value his/her own rights in socially approved ways.

Relationship to chilren and adults.

Training Session

1. The parent trainer will organize materials and model opportunities, experiences and interactions that will help the parents see themselves in a positive affective relationship with their children.
2. The parent trainer will model behaviors that permit the child to see adults as support persons, resource persons, and as individuals who will help them control their own feelings.
3. The parent trainer will help the parent create a safe "child proof" home that the child can investigate without harm or accident.
4. Parent trainer will model and demonstrate the use of language as a questioning, labeling and clarifying tool.

Parent Follow Up

1. The parent will build and elaborate upon bahaviors and decisions modeled by parent trainers.

   For example: The parent will organize a simple cooking experience and act at a resource person, but will not direct nor perform the task.

For example: The child will approach the adult with information, questions, and fanciful ideas knowing he will be respected.

2. The parent will continue to plan and organize a safe, interesting environment for her child.
3. Parents will individualize the use of study packets and other learning materials - see appendix.

Parent Group

1. In each weekly session the group and its individuals will act as nurturing, supportive agents for each of the individual participants.

   For example: The individual members will learn they can ask for help when needed, use the group as a resource for problem solving and feedback and vent their emotions in the group rather than against their children.

   For example: Each parent will learn she/he is one of many with similar if not identical problems.

2. The director and parent trainers will organize the use of resource persons and material appropriate to the development of a trusting child/adult relationship.
3. The parents will discuss the importance of health and safety.

4. The director will organize many special programs on nutrition. Parents will discuss nutritional requirements of young children.
5. The director will organize input on language development and language usage.

Children's Group

In the complexity of a larger group the child will learn he/she must share the adult, but that the adult is still a trustful, supportive person and continues to be available for nurture, warmth, information, recognition, and control when needed.

Relationship to Peers

Training Session

Activities which relate to peer relationships will take place in the children's group, but when desirable the parent trainer will create small groups of two - four children. The purpose of these small groups will be:

1. for children to improve in
   a. working or playing on a cooperative level with others by contributing ideas, helping in learning situations, and incorporating ideas and help from others
   b. learning to settle differences by talking things over.

c. safely refusing to participate in an activity suggested by another.

d. refusing to participate in activities that are destructive to another child or to himself/herself,

2. for adults to observe the child's peer interaction.

Parent Follow Up

The parent will build and elaborate upon information and understandings developed with the parent trainers.

Parent Group

By regarding the weekly Parent Group as a social situation parents may more probably improve and learn new skills of peer interaction.

For example: Parents will work together in:

1. learning a craft for which the objective is self fulfillment;
2. organizing a family night supper;
3. designing an outdoor playground, discussing it's use in facilitating children's peer behaviors.

Children's Group

1. The learning environment, including spatial arrangement, teacher attitudes and behaviors, will be designed in such a way that children can:

a. work or play on a cooperative level with others by contributing ideas, helping in learning situations, and incorporating ideas and help from others,
b. learn to settle differences by talking things over,
c. safely refuse to participate in an activity suggested by another,
d. refuse to participate in activities that are destructive to another child or to him/herself.

2. The total environment needs to be flexible enough to allow each child the opportunity to work at his own level in the continuum of behaviors that lead to the stated high level goals.

Relationship to Materials and Ideas

Training Session

1. The parent trainer will model the organization of materials and activities for parents to
   a. observe children as they make choices and decisions
   b. note the child's interest or involvement with various materials--thus recognizing appropriate materials
   c. create learning opportunities
   d. accept and encourage the child's creative use of materials and ideas
   e. recognize the value of attitudes and skills gained through clean up and organization of materials after they have been used.

For example: The parent trainer will

1. plan sorting and classifying activities to develop concepts of likeness, difference, size, shape, color, quantity, etc.
2. introduce new words in English and/or Spanish as labels for objects, persons, or actions.
3. use picture and story books to reinforce language development.

2. The parent trainer will organize and model behaviors and activities that help demonstrate the importance of nutrition.

Parent Follow Up

The parent will build and elaborate upon behaviors modeled by the parent trainer.

For example: The parent will

1. talk with the child about colors in the environment
2. use opportunitites for sequencing dishes or shoes from smallest to largest and objects from softest to hardest
3. allow the child to match pairs of socks and sort clothes according to owner or use.
4. will encourage safe exploration to determine the properties of dough, jars and lids, nuts and bolts, water, tempera paint, etc.

5. will use language to describe actions and ideas--"We need to wash the cups, saucers, plates, glasses, knives, etc."
6. will talk about pictures and read stories from attractive children's books
7. read labels on cans and boxes.

Parent Group

1. In the weekly sessions the director and parent trainers will introduce and encourage discussion about
   a. appropriate and safe inexpensive materials for young children
   b. observation they have made about their child's interaction with materials
   c. their child's use of language and level of questioning.
2. The director will plan the use of resource persons, films, and reading materials to guide discussions of cognitive development in young children--i.e. a child's thinking is quite different from an adult.

Children's Group

1. Parents will participate with small groups of children to observe their interaction with materials and use that knowledge to plan appropriate ways to intervene with questions and suggestions.

2. Parents will plan learning activities or centers which will motivate children at different levels of thinking and allow them to become involved.
3. Children will make decisions about their own activity and materials they need to fulfill their plan. They will be encouraged to use language to communicate their actions and results.

   For example:

   1. sorting buttons of different sizes and colors and being able to tell why
   2. painting with tempera and telling about the picture
   3. participating in, and learning from trips into the community.

4. Children will be involved in cooking and nutritional activities.
5. Children will work with parent trainer and volunteer parents on lessons which involve tooth brushing, important food groups, and the effects of appropriate foods on various animals.

Relationship to the Group

Training Session

Not applicable

Follow Up

Not applicable

Parent Group

1. Parents will cooperatively discuss group aims with parent trainer and come to agreement as to common aims within guidelines of the Home Start Project.
2. As group members, parents will contribute information and accept information--always working toward the objectives of valuing themselves, their children, and other group members.

Children's Group

1. The children will participate as members of a group in a variety of activities, that allow them to learn about groups, and how they differ from individual activities.
2. Certain rules and laws are necessary such as: talking over misunderstandings, sharing responsibilty instead of always being boss, and helping the group work.

Evaluation

Common for all Relationship Areas

It is important to provide successful experiences and learning opportunities for both parents and children,

therefore, evaluation focuses upon the behaviors of the director and the parent trainers.

As the director and parent trainers plan what the learners will become and thus what they should do next, they are responsible for three decisions with regard to the task, learners behavior and teacher's behavior.

1. What is the task? Is the task correct for this learner?
2. What is the learner's behavior? Is the expected behavior productive for learning the designated task?
3. What is the teacher's behavior? Has the teacher designed the appropriate learning experience?

Examination of these questions makes it possible for the teacher to make correct decisions as to: 1) reteach or remodel a desired learning; 2) abandon a learning experience because of current incoming information that modifies the objective; 3) practice or extend the learning; or 4) move to the next appropriate learning.

Parent education--Home Start--centers are a viable means of providing support for parents and children (Gordon, 1973). It is not proposed that this guide is an exclusive one, it is a model of one alternative whose content is based upon areas proven to be important, and

fruitful. Paraprofessionals can operate such centers with inservice training, and parents will voluntarily send their children to such programs, and will themselves participate. Generally, experience leads one to believe that parent education is an important component for adaptation to service programs.

Table 1

ORGANIZATION OF EXPERIENCES

	Who	Where	When	Why
Traning Session	*Parent Trainer Parent or parent substitute Child	Child's home	1 hour-weekly	Parent Trainer, to help parents learn more effective ways of teaching thier children.
Follow Up	*Parent Child	Home	Continuously	Parents to practice and extend their skills.
Parent Group	*Director Parent Trainers Parents	Meeting Place	____weekly	
Children's	*Parent Trainers Director Children Parents	Children's room	____weekly	

*Person responsible for session